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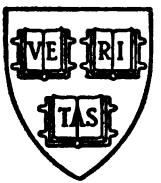

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MODERN RUSSIAN CLASSICS

SILENCE: BY L. N. ANDREYEV.
THE WHITE DOG: BY FEODOR SOLOGUB
THE DOCTOR: BY MICHAEL ARTZIBASHEV
A FATHER: BY ANTON TCHEKOV
HER LOVER: BY MAXIM GORKY

INTRODUCTION BY ISAAC GOLDBERG

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INTRODUCTION

THE present collection of Russian tales, comprising five of the best known stories in modern Russian literature, is useful not only as a sample of the Slavic excellency in this peculiarly contemporary form, nor yet merely as a study in the technique of the tale,—a study, by the way, which in these days has grown to the proportions of a literary disease, and which may be explained by the fact that creativeness cannot be taught, while some of its external methods may be imitated. One of the attributes, indeed, of Russian fiction,—a characteristic that raises it far above the level of our general magazine mediocrity,—is that it subordinates technique to content, or even ignores the more finnicky aspects of form. I do not say that such an attitude is commendable, nor is it a requisite for a closer attention to the vital matter of the tale. In comparison with our perk native writers, however, who sometimes seem to have mastered the secret of saying nothing extremely well, I think the so-called "carelessness" of more than one Russian writer far superior, even as technique. For he is getting somewhere in the best way he knows how, not deftly avoiding the approach to thought.

It so happens, however, that our notions as to the lumbering methods of the Russian story teller are gathered from but a few examples, and founded upon insufficient data. How many of our native writers could so concisely produce the effect that Andreyev

has achieved in *Silence,* or in *Lazarus?* How many of our self-conscious technicians can handle the elusive tale of abnormal psychological background with the direct simplicity of Sologub in *The White Dog?* As to Artzibashev's *The Doctor,*—it is so human and so powerfully wrought that it would probably break down the resistance of the average American magazine-editor, who is so terribly appalled at the requirements of his imaginary "reading public," whom he attempts to placate with that more or less spectral entity (pardon the contradictory terms), a "policy." Tchekov's *A Father* would promptly be rejected by the same trembling potentate, probably on the score that it offended "the ideals of paternity," or some other euphemism meant to veil the fact that he feared to lead his precious "reading public" out of the rut of mediocrity. And Gorky's *Her Lover?* I can imagine the sophomoric comment of the great American Editor. "Untrue to life,"—the life of the editorial office. "Mentally unbalanced,"—because different.

Why do I speak these unkind things? Because I have more faith in the American reading public than in the American editor. Because,—and this is what I started to say in the first place,—the chief interest of these tales (as it should be of all) is their human content. Technique and tricks of the literary trade are secondary to the human element, in whose service they should be employed. I ask nothing more of a story than that it should interest me in my fellow man. If I get that, I can forgive much else. And that is something which, speaking generally, our native writers can learn from the Russians, who were wel-

comed with open arms just because they gave us something that our own editors and writers denied us. And I say editors as well as writers because even where the latter present their more sincere efforts the former are there to choke them off from the reader.

ISAAC GOLDBERG

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SILENCE

By L. N. ANDREYEV

I.

On a moonlight night in May, when the nightingales were singing, his wife came to Father Ignaty who was sitting in his study. Her face was expressive of suffering, and the small lamp trembled in her hand. She came up to her husband, touched him on the shoulder, and said sobbing:

"Father, let us go to Verochka!"

Without turning his head, Father Ignaty frowned at his wife over his spectacles, and looked long and fixedly until she made a motion of discomfort with her free hand, and sat down on a low divan.

"How pitiless you *both* are," said she slowly and with strong emphasis on the word both, and her kindly puffed face was contorted with a look of pain and hardness, as though she wished to express by her looks how hard people were—her husband and her daughter.

Father Ignaty gave a laugh and stood up. Closing his book, he took off his spectacles, put them into their case, and fell into a brown study. His big black beard, shot with silver threads, lay in a graceful curve upon his chest, and rose and fell slowly under his deep breathing.

"Well, then, we will go!" said he.

Olga Stepanovna rose quickly, and asked in a timid ingratiating voice:

"Only don't scold her, father! You know what she is."

Vera's room was in a belvedere at the top of the house, and the narrow wooden stairs bent and groaned under the heavy steps of Father Ignaty. Tall and ponderous, he was obliged to stoop so as not to hit his head against the ceiling above, and he frowned fastidiously when his wife's white jacket touched his face. He knew that nothing would come of their conversation with Vera.

"What, is that you?" asked Vera, lifting one bare arm to her eyes. The other arm lay on the top of the white summer counterpane, from which it was scarcely distinguishable, so white, transparent and cold was it.

"Verochka!" the mother began, but gave a sob and was silent.

"Vera!" said the father, endeavoring to soften his dry, hard voice. "Vera, tell us what is the matter with you?"

Vera was silent.

"Vera, are your mother and I undeserving of your confidence? Do we not love you? Have you any one nearer to you than ourselves? Speak to us of your grief, and believe me, an old and experienced man, you will feel the better for it. And so shall we. Look at your old mother, how she is suffering."

"Verochka—!"

"And to me—" his voice trembled, as though something in it had broken in two, "and to me, is it easy, think you? As though I did not see that you were devoured by some grief—, but what is it? And I, your father, am kept in ignorance. Is it right?"

Vera still kept silence. Father Ignaty stroked his beard with special precaution, as though he feared that

his fingers would involuntarily begin to tear it, and continued:

"Against my wishes you went to St. Petersburg—did I curse you for your disobedience? Or did I refuse money? Or do you say I was not kind? Well, why don't you speak? See the good your St. Petersburg has done you!"

Father Ignaty ceased speaking, and there rose before his mind's eye something big, granite-built, terrible, full of unknown dangers and of strange callous people. And there alone and weak was his Vera, and there she had been ruined. An angry hatred of that terrible incomprehensible city arose in Father Ignaty's soul, together with anger towards his daughter, who kept silent, so obstinately silent.

"St. Petersburg has nothing to do with it," said Vera crossly, and closed her eyes. "But there is nothing the matter with me. You had better go to bed, it's late."

"Verochka!" groaned her mother. "My little daughter, confide in me!"

"Oh! mamma!" said Vera, impatiently interrupting her.

Father Ignaty sat down on a chair and began to laugh.

"Well then, nothing is the matter after all?" he asked ironically.

"Father," said Vera, in a sharp voice, raising herself up on her bed, "you know that I love you and mamma. But—I do feel so dull. All this will pass away. Really, you had better go to bed. I want to sleep, too. To-morrow, or sometime, we will have a talk."

Father Ignaty rose abruptly, so that his chair

bumped against the wall, and took his wife's arm.

"Let's go!"

"Verochka—!"

"Let's go—I tell you," cried Father Ignaty. "If she has forgotten God, shall we too! Why should we!"

He drew Olga Stepanovna away, almost by main force, and as they were descending the stairs, she, dragging her steps more slowly, said in an angry whisper:

"Ugh! pope, it's you who have made her so. It's from you she has got this manner. And you'll have to answer for it. Ah! how wretched I am—"

And she began to cry, and kept blinking her eyes, so that she could not see the steps, and letting her feet go down as it were into an abyss below into which she wished to precipitate herself.

From that day forward Father Ignaty ceased to talk to his daughter, and she seemed not to notice the change. As before, she would now lie in her room, now go about, frequently wiping her eyes with the palms of her hands, as though they were obstructed. And oppressed by the silence of these two people, the pope's wife who was fond of jokes and laughter, became lost and timid, hardly knowing what to say or do.

Sometimes Vera went out for a walk. About a week after the conversation related above, she went out in the evening as usual. They never saw her again alive, for that evening she threw herself under a train, which cut her in two.

Father Ignaty buried her himself. His wife was not present at the church, because at the news of Vera's death she had had a stroke. She had lost the use of her feet and hands and tongue, and lay motionless in

semi-darkened room, while close by her the bells ɔlled in the belfry. She heard them all coming out of hurch, heard the choristers singing before their house, nd tried to raise her hand to cross herself, but the and would not obey her will. She wished to say: Good-bye, Vera," but her tongue lay inert in her nouth, swollen and heavy. She lay so still that any ne who saw her would have thought that she was esting, or asleep. Only—her eyes were open.

There were many people in the church at the uneral, both acquaintances of Father Ignaty's and trangers. All present compassionated Vera, who had lied such a terrible death, and they tried in Father gnaty's movements and voice to find signs of pro- ound grief. They were not fond of Father Ignaty, ɔecause he was rough and haughty in his manners, ıarsh and unforgiving with his penitents, while him- elf jealous and greedy, he availed himself of every hance to take more than his dues from a parishioner. They all wished to see him suffering, broken-down; hey wished to see him acknowledge that he was doubly guilty of his daughter's death—as a harsh father, as ı bad priest, who could not protect his own flesh and ɔlood from sin. So they all watched him with curi- ɔsity, but he, feeling their eyes directed on his broad ɔowerful back, endeavored to straighten it, and thought ıot so much of his dead daughter as of not compro- mising his dignity.

"A well-seasoned pope," Karzenov the carpenter, to whom he still owed money for some frames, said with a nod in his direction.

And so, firm and upright, Father Ignaty went to the cemetery, and came back the same. And not till

he reached the door of his wife's room did his bad bend a little; but that might have been because th door was not high enough for his stature. Comin in from the light he could only with difficulty distin guish his wife's face, and when he succeeded in s doing, he perceived that it was perfectly still and tha there were no tears in her eyes. In them was then neither anger nor grief; they were dumb, and pain fully, obstinately silent, as was also her whole obes feeble body that was pressed against the bed-rail.

"Well, what? How are you feeling?" Father Ignat inquired.

But her lips were dumb, and her eyes were silent Father Ignaty laid his hand on her forehead; it wa cold and damp, and Olga Stepanovna gave no sig whatever that she had felt his touch. And when h removed his hands from her forehead, two deep, gre eyes looked at him without blinking; they seemed almost black on account of the dilation of the pupils and in them was neither grief nor anger.

"Well, I will go to my own room," said Fathe Ignaty, who had turned cold and frightened.

He went through the guest-chamber, where ever thing was clean and orderly as ever, and the hig backed chairs stood swathed in white covers, li corpses in their shrouds. At one of the windows hu a wire cage, but it was empty and the door open.

"Nastasya!" Father Ignaty called, and his voi seemed to him rough, and he felt awkward, that h had called so loud in those quiet rooms, so soon afte the funeral of their daughter. "Nastasya," he calle more gently, "where's the canary?"

The cook, who had cried so much that her nos

was swollen and become as red as a beet, answered rudely:

"Don't know. It flew away."

"Why did you let it go?" said Father Ignaty, angrily knitting his brows.

Nastasya burst out crying, and wiping her eyes with the ends of a print kerchief she wore over her head, said through her tears:

"The dear little soul of the young mistress. How could I help it?"

And it seemed even to Father Ignaty that the happy little yellow canary, which used to sing always with its head thrown back, was really the soul of Vera, and that if it had not flown away it would have been impossible to say that Vera was dead. And he became still more angry with the cook, and shouted:

"Get along!" and when Nastasya did not at once make for the door, added "Fool!"

II.

FROM the day of the funeral silence reigned in the little house. It was not stillness, for that is the mere absence of noise, but it was *silence* which means that those who kept silence could, apparently, have spoken if they had pleased. So thought Father Ignaty when, entering his wife's chamber, he would meet an obstinate glance, so heavy that it was as though the whole air were turned to lead, and was pressing on his head and back. So he thought when he examined his daughter's music, on which her very voice was impressed; her books, and her portrait, a large one painted in colors which she had brought with her from St.

Petersburg. In examining her portrait a certain order was evolved.

First he would look at her neck, on which the light was thrown in the portrait, and would imagine to himself a scratch on it, such as was on the neck of the dead Vera, and the origin of which he could not understand. And every time he meditated on the cause. If it had been the train which struck it, it would have shattered her whole head, and the head of the dead Vera was quite uninjured.

Could it be that some one had touched it with his foot when carrying home the corpse; or was it done unintentionally with the nail?

But to think long about the details of her death was horrible to Father Ignaty, so he would pass on to the eyes of the portrait. They were black and beautiful, with long eyelashes, the thick shadow of which lay below, so that the whites seemed peculiarly bright, and the two eyes were as though enclosed in black mourning frames. The unknown artist, a man of talent, had given to them a strange expression. It was as though between the eyes, and that on which they rested, there was a thin, transparent film. It reminded one of the black top of a grand piano, on which the summer dust lay in a thin layer, almost imperceptible, but still dimming the brightness of the polished wood. And wherever Father Ignaty placed the portrait, the eyes continually followed him, not speaking, but silent; and the silence was so clear that it seemed possible to hear it. And by degrees Father Ignaty came to think that he did hear the silence.

Every morning after the Eucharist Father Ignaty would go to the sitting-room, would take in at a glance

the empty cage, and all the well-known arrangement of the room, sit down in an arm-chair, close his eyes and listen to the silence of the house. It was something strange. The cage was gently and tenderly silent; and grief and tears, and far-away dead laughter were felt in that silence. The silence of his wife, softened by the intervening walls, was obstinate, heavy as lead; and terrible, so terrible that Father Ignaty turned cold on the hottest day. Endless, cold as the grave, mysterious as death, was the silence of his daughter. It was as though it longed passionately to pass into speech, but that something strong and dull as a machine, held it motionless, and stretched it like a wire. And then somewhere in the far distance, the wire began to vibrate and emit a soft, timid, pitiful sound. Father Ignaty, with a mixture of joy and fear, would catch this incipient sound, and pressing his hands on the arms of the chair, would stretch his head forward and wait for the sound to reach him. But it would break off, and lapse into silence.

"Nonsense!" Father Ignaty would angrily exclaim, and rise from the chair tall and upright as ever. From the window was to be seen the market-place, bathed in sunlight, paved with round, even stones, and on the other side the stone wall of a long, windowless storehouse. At the corner stood a cab like a statue in clay, and it was incomprehensible why it continued to stand there, when for whole hours together not a single passerby was to be seen.

III.

Out of the house Father Ignaty had much talking to do: with his ecclesiastical subordinates, and with his parishioners when he was performing his duties; and

sometimes with acquaintances when he played with them at "Preference." But when he returned home he thought that he had been all the day silent. This came of the fact that with none of these people could he speak of the question which was the chief and most important of all to him, which racked his thoughts every night: Why had Vera died?

Father Ignaty was unwilling to admit to himself that it was impossible now to solve this difficulty, and kept on thinking that it was still possible.

Every night—and they were all now for him sleepless—he would recall the moment when he and his wife had stood by Vera's bed at darkest midnight, and he had entreated her "Speak!" And when in his recollections he arrived at that word, even the rest of the scene presented itself to him as different to what it had really been. His closed eyes preserved in their darkness a vivid, unblurred picture of that night; they saw distinctly Vera lifting herself up upon her bed and saying with a smile—— But what did she say? And that unuttered word of hers, which would solve the whole question, seemed so near, that if he were to stretch his ear and still the beating of his heart, then, then he would hear it—and at the same time it was so infinitely, so desperately far.

Father Ignaty would rise from his bed, and stretching forth his clasped hands in a gesture of supplication, entreat:

"Vera!"

And silence was the answer he received.

One evening Father Ignaty went to Olga Stepanovna's room, where he had not been for about a week, and sitting down near the head of her bed, he

turned away from her doleful, obstinate gaze, and said:

"Mother! I want to talk to you about Vera. Do you hear?"

Her eyes were silent, and Father Ignaty raising his voice began to speak in the loud and severe tones with which he addressed his penitents:

"I know you think that I was the cause of Vera's death. But consider, did I love her less than you? You judge strangely—I was strict, but did that prevent her from doing as she pleased? I made little of the respect due to a father; I meekly bowed my neck, when she, with no fear of my curse, went away—thither. And you—mother—did not you with tears entreat her to remain, until I ordered you to be silent. Am I responsible for her being born hard-hearted? Did I not teach her of God, of humanity, and of love?"

Father Ignaty gave a swift glance into his wife's eyes, and turned away.

"What could I do with her, if she would not open her grief to me. Command? I commanded her. Entreat? I entreated. What? Do you think I ought to have gone down on my knees before the little chit of a girl, and wept, like an old woman! What she had got in her head, and where she got it, I know not. Cruel, heartless daughter!"

Father Ignaty smote his knees with his fists.

"She was devoid of love—that's what it was! I know well enough what she called me—a tyrant. You she did love, didn't she? You who wept, and—humbled yourself?"

Father Ignaty laughed noiselessly.

"Lo—o—ved! That's it, to comfort you she chose

such a death—a cruel, disgraceful death! She died on the ballast, in the dirt—like a d—d—dog, to which someone gives a kick on the muzzle."

Father Ignaty's voice sounded low and hoarse:

"I'm ashamed! I'm ashamed to go out into the street! I'm ashamed to come out of the chancel! I'm ashamed before God. Cruel, unworthy daughter! One could curse you in your grave—"

When Father Ignaty glanced again at his wife, she had fainted, and did not come to herself for some hours. And when she did come to herself her eyes were silent, and it was impossible to know whether she understood what Father Ignaty had said to her, or no.

That same night—it was a moonlight night in July, still, warm, soundless—Father Ignaty crept on tiptoe so that his wife and her nurse should not hear him, up the stairs to Vera's room. The window of the belvedere had not been opened since the death of Vera, and the atmosphere was dry and hot, with a slight smell of scorching from the iron roof, which had become heated during the day. There was an uninhabited and deserted feeling about the apartment from which man had been absent so long, and in which the wood of the walls, the furniture and other objects gave out a faint smell of growing decay.

The moonlight fell in a bright stripe across the window and floor, and reflected by the carefully washed white boards it illumined the corners with a dim semi-light, and the clean white bed with its two pillows, a big one and a little one, looked unearthly and ghostly. Father Ignaty opened the window, and the fresh air poured into the room in a broad stream, smelling of dust, of the neighboring river, and the flowering lime,

and bore on it a scarcely audible chorus, apparently, of people rowing a boat, and singing as they rowed.

Stepping silently on his naked feet, like a white ghost, Father Ignaty approached the empty bed, and bending his knees fell face down on the pillows, and embraced them—the place where Vera's face ought to have been.

He lay long so. The song became louder, and then gradually became inaudible; but he still lay there, with his long black hair dishevelled over his shoulders and on the bed.

The moon had moved on, and the room had become darker, when Father Ignaty raised his head, and throwing into his voice all the force of a long suppressed and long unacknowledged love, and listening to his words, as though not he, but Vera, were listening to them, exclaimed:

"Vera, my daughter! Do you understand what it means, daughter! Little daughter! My heart! my blood! my life! Your father, your poor old father, already grey and feeble."

His shoulders shook, and all his heavy frame was convulsed. With a shudder Father Ignaty whispered tenderly, as to a little child:

"Your poor old father asks you. Yes, Verochka, he entreats. He weeps. He who never was so wont. Your grief, my little daughter, your suffering, are my own. More than mine."

Father Ignaty shook his head.

"More, Verochka. What is death to me, an old man? But you—. If only you had realized, how tender, weak and timid you were! Do you remember how when you pricked your finger and the blood came,

you began to cry? My little daughter! And you do indeed love me, love me dearly, I know. Every morning you kiss my hand. Speak, speak of what is grieving you—and I with these two hands will strangle your grief. They are still strong, Vera, these hands."

His locks shook. "Speak!"

He fixed his eyes on the wall, and stretching out his hands cried: "Speak."

But the chamber was silent, and from the far distance was borne in the sound of the long and short whistles of a locomotive.

Father Ignaty, rolling his distended eyes, as though there stood before him the frightful ghost of a multilated corpse, slowly raised himself from his knees, and with uncertain movement lifted his hand, with the fingers separated and nervously stretched out, to his head. Going out by the door, Father Ignaty sharply whispered the word: "Speak!"

And silence was the answer he received.

IV.

THE next day, after an early and solitary dinner, Father Ignaty went to the cemetery—for the first time since the death of his daughter. It was close, deserted, and still, as though the hot day were but an illumined night; but Father Ignaty, as his habit was, with an effort straightened his back, looked sternly from side to side, and thought that he was the same as heretofore. He did not regard the new, but terrible, weakness of his legs, nor that his long beard had grown completely white, as though bitten by a hard frost. The way to the cemetery led through the long, straight street, which sloped gently upwards, and at the end of

which gleamed white the roof of the lych-gate, which was like a black, ever-open mouth edged with gleaming teeth.

Vera's grave lay in the very depth of the cemetery, where the gravelled pathways ended; and Father Ignaty had to wander for long on the narrow tracks, along a broken line of little mounds which protrude from the grass, forgotten of all, deserted of all. Here and there he came upon monuments sloping and green with age, broken-down railings, and great heavy stones cast upon the ground, and pressing it with a sort of grim senile malignity.

Vera's grave was next to one of these stones. It was covered with new sods, already turning yellow, while all around it was green. A rowan tree was intertwined with a maple, and a widely spreading clump of hazel stretched its pliant branches with rough furred leaves over the grave. Sitting down on the neighboring tomb and signing repeatedly, Father Ignaty looked round, cast a glance at the cloudless desert sky, in which the red-hot disc of the sun hung suspended in perfect immobility—and then only did he become conscious of that profound stillness, like nothing else in the world, which holds sway over a cemetery, when there is not a breath of wind to rustle the dead leaves. And once more the thought came to Father Ignaty, that this was not stillness, but silence. It overflowed to the very brick walls of the cemetery, climbed heavily over them, and submerged the city. And its end was only there—in those grey, stubbornly, obstinately silent eyes.

Father Ignaty shrugged his shoulders, which were becoming cold, and let his eyes fall on Vera's grave.

He gazed long at the short little seared stalks of grass, which had been torn from the ground somewhere in the wide wind-swept fields, and had failed to take root in the new soil; and he could not realize that there under that grass, at a few feet from him, lay Vera. And this nearness seemed incomprehensible, and imbued his soul with a confusion and strange alarm. She, of whom he was accustomed to think as having forever disappeared in the dark depth of infinity, was here, close—and it was difficult to understand that nevertheless she was not, and never would be again. And it seemed to Father Ignaty that if he spoke some word which he almost felt upon his lips, or if he made some movement, Vera would come forth from the tomb, and stand up as tall and beautiful as ever. And that not only would she arise; but that all the dead, who could be felt, so awesome in their solemn cold silence, would rise too.

Father Ignaty took off his black wide-brimmed hat, smoothed his wavy locks, and said in a whisper:

"Vera!"

He became uneasy lest he should be heard by some stranger, and stood upon the tomb and looked over the crosses. But there was no one near and he repeated aloud:

"Vera!"

It was Father Ignaty's old voice, dry and exacting, and it was strange that a demand made with such force remained without answer.

"Vera!"

Loud and persistently the voice called, and when it was silent for a moment it seemed as though somewhere below a vague answer resounded. And Father

Ignaty looked once more around, removed his hair from his ears, and laid them on the rough prickly sod.

"Vera! Speak!"

And Father Ignaty felt with horror that something cold as the tomb penetrated his ear, and froze the brain, and that Vera spoke—but what she said was ever the same long silence. It became ever more and more alarming and terrible, and when Father Ignaty dragged his head with an effort from the ground, pale as that of a corpse, it seemed to him that the whole air trembled and vibrated with a resonant silence, as though a wild storm had risen on that terrible sea. The silence choked him: it kept rolling backwards and forwards through his head in icy waves, and stirred his hair; it broke against his bosom, which groaned beneath the shocks. Trembling all over, casting from side to side quick, nervous glances, he slowly raised himself, and strove with torturing efforts to straighten his back and to restore the proud carriage to his trembling body. And in this he succeeded. With slow deliberation he shook the dust from his knees, put on his hat, made the sign of the cross three times over the grave, and went with even, firm gait, and yet did not recognize the well-known cemetery and lost his way.

"Lost my way!" he laughed, and stood still at the branching paths.

He stood still for a moment, and then without thinking turned to the left, because it was impossible to stand still and wait. The silence pursued him. It rose from the green graves; the grim grey crosses breathed it; it came forth in thin suffocating streams from every pore of the ground, which was sated with

corpses. Father Ignaty's steps became quicker and quicker. Dazed, he went round the same paths again and again, he leapt the graves, stumbled against the railings, grasped the prickly tin wreaths, and the soft stuff tore to pieces in his hands. Only one thought, that of getting out, was left in his head. He rushed from side to side, and at last ran noiselessly, a tall figure, almost unrecognizable in his streaming cassock, with his hair floating on the air. More frightened than at the sight of a corpse risen from the grave, would have been any one who had met this wild figure of a man running, leaping, waving his arms—if he had recognized his mad distorted face, and heard the dull rattle that escaped from his open mouth.

At full run Father Ignaty jumped out upon the little square at the end of which stood the low white mortuary chapel. In the porch on a little bench there dozed an old man who looked like a pilgrim from afar, and near him two old beggar-women were flying at one another, quarreling and scolding.

When Father Ignaty reached home, it was already getting dark, and the lamp was lit in Olga Stepanovna's room. Without change of clothes or removing his hat, torn and dusty, he came hurriedly to his wife and fell on his knees.

"Mother—Olga—pity me!" he sobbed tumultuously, painfully, as a man does who never weeps. He lifted his head, confident that in a moment a miracle would be performed, and that his wife would speak, and pity him.

"Dear!"

With his whole big body he stretched out towards his wife, and met the look of the grey eyes. In them there was neither compassion nor anger. Maybe his wife forgave and pitied him, but in those eyes there was neither pity nor forgiveness. They were dumb and silent.

And the whole desolate house was silent.

THE WHITE DOG

By FEODOR SOLOGUB

EVERYTHING grew irksome for Alexandra Ivanovna in the workshop of this out-of-the-way town—the patterns, the clatter of machines, the complaints of the managers; it was the shop in which she had served as apprentice and now for several years as seamstress. Everything irritated Alexandra Ivanovna; she quarrelled with every one and abused the innocent apprentices. Among others to suffer from her outbursts of temper was Tanechka, the youngest of the seamstresses, who had only recently become an apprentice. In the beginning Tanechka submitted to her abuse in silence. In the end she revolted, and, addressing herself to her assailant, said, quite calmly and affably, so that every one laughed:

"You, Alexandra Ivanovna, are a downright dog!"

Alexandra Ivanovna felt humiliated.

"You are a dog yourself!" she exclaimed.

Tanechka was sitting sewing. She paused now and then from her work and said in a calm, deliberate manner:

"You always whine . . . Certainly, you are a dog . . . You have a dog's snout . . . And a dog's ears . . . And a wagging tail . . . The mistress will soon drive you out of doors, because you are the most detestable of dogs, a poodle."

Tanechka was a young, plump, rosy-cheeked girl with an innocent, good-natured face, which revealed,

however, a trace of cunning. She sat there so demurely, barefooted, still dressed in her apprentice clothes; her eyes were clear, and her brows were highly arched on her fine curved white forehead, framed by straight, dark chestnut hair, which in the distance looked black. Tanechka's voice was clear, even, sweet, insinuating, and if one could have heard its sound only, and not given heed to the words, it would have given the impression that she was paying Alexandra Ivanovna compliments.

The other seamstresses laughed, the apprentices chuckled, they covered their faces with their black aprons and cast side glances at Alexandra Ivanovna. As for Alexandra Ivanovna, she was livid with rage.

"Wretch!" she exclaimed. "I will pull your ears for you! I won't leave a hair on your head."

Tanechka replied in a gentle voice:

"The paws are a trifle short . . . The poodle bites as well as barks . . . It may be necessary to buy a muzzle."

Alexandra Ivanovna made a movement toward Tanechka. But before Tanechka had time to lay aside her work and get up, the mistress of the establishment, a large, serious-looking woman, entered, rustling her dress.

She said sternly: "Alexandra Ivanovna, what do you mean by making such a fuss?"

Alexandra Ivanovna, much agitated, replied: "Irina Petrovna, I wish you would forbid her to call me a dog!"

Tanechka in her turn complained: "She is always snarling at something or other. Always quibbling at the smallest trifles."

But the mistress looked at her sternly and said: "Tanechka, I can see through you. Are you sure you didn't begin? You needn't think that because you are a seamstress now you are an important person. If it weren't for your mother's sake—"

Tanechka grew red, but preserved her innocent and affable manner. She addressed her mistress in a subdued voice: "Forgive me, Irina Petrovna, I will not do it again. But it wasn't altogether my fault . . ."

Alexandra Ivanovna returned home almost ill with rage. Tanechka had guessed her weakness.

"A dog! Well, then I am a dog," thought Alexandra Ivanovna, "but it is none of her affair! Have I looked to see whether she is a serpent or a fox? It is easy to find one out, but why make a fuss about it? Is a dog worse than any other animal?"

The clear summer night languished and sighed, a soft breeze from the adjacent fields occasionally blew down the peaceful streets. The moon rose clear and full, that very same moon which rose long ago at another place, over the broad desolate steppe, the home of the wild, of those who ran free, and whined in their ancient earthly travail. The very same, as then and in that region.

And now, as then, glowed eyes sick with longing; and her heart, still wild, not forgetting in town the great spaciousness of the steppe, felt oppressed; her throat was troubled with a tormenting desire to howl like a wild thing.

She was about to undress, but what was the use? She could not sleep, anyway.

She went into the passage. The warm planks of the floor bent and creaked under her, and small shavings and sand which covered them tickled her feet not unpleasantly.

She went out on the doorstep. There sat the *babushka* Stepanida, a black figure in her black shawl, gaunt and shrivelled. She sat with her head bent, and it seemed as though she were warming herself in the rays of the cold moon.

Alexandra Ivanovna sat down beside her. She kept looking at the old woman sideways. The large curved nose of her companion seemed to her like the beak of an old bird.

"A crow?" Alexandra Ivanovna asked herself.

She smiled, forgetting for the moment her longing and her fears. Shrewd as the eyes of a dog her own lighted up with the joy of her discovery. In the pale green light of the moon the wrinkles of her faded face became altogether invisible, and she seemed once more young and merry and light-hearted, just as she was ten years ago, when the moon had not yet called upon her to bark and bay of nights before the windows of the dark bathhouse.

She moved closer to the old woman, and said affably: "*Babushka* Stepanida, there is something I have been wanting to ask you."

The old woman turned to her, her dark face furrowed with wrinkles, and asked in a sharp, oldish voice that sounded like a caw: "Well, my dear? Go ahead and ask?"

Alexandra Ivanovna gave a repressed laugh; her thin shoulders suddenly trembled from a chill that ran down her spine.

She spoke very quietly: *"Babushka* Stepanida, it seems to me—tell me is it true?—I don't know exactly how to put it—but you, *babushka,* please don't take offence—it is not from malice that I—"

"Go on, my dear, never fear, say it," said the old woman.

She looked at Alexandra Ivanovna with glowing, penetrating eyes.

"It seems to me, *babushka*—please, now, don't take offence—as though you, *babushka,* were a crow."

The old woman turned away. She was silent and merely nodded her head. She had the appearance of one who had recalled something. Her head, with its sharply outlined nose, bowed and nodded, and at last it seemed to Alexandra Ivanovna that the old woman was dozing. Dozing, and mumbling something under her nose. Nodding her head and mumbling some old forgotten words—old magic words.

An intense quiet reigned out of doors. It was neither light nor dark, and everything seemed bewitched with the inarticulate mumbling of old forgotten words. Everything languished and seemed lost in apathy. Again a longing oppressed her heart. And it was neither a dream nor an illusion. A thousand perfumes, imperceptible by day, became subtly distinguishable, and they recalled something ancient and primitive, something forgotten in the long ages.

In a barely audible voice the old woman mumbled: "Yes, I am a crow. Only I have no wings. But there are times when I caw, and I caw, and tell of woe. And I am given to forebodings, my dear; each time

I have one I simply must caw. People are not particularly anxious to hear me. And when I see a doomed person I have such a strong desire to caw."

The old woman suddenly made a sweeping movement with her arms, and in a shrill voice cried out twice: "Kar-r, Kar-r!"

Alexandra Ivanovna shuddered, and asked:

"Babushka, at whom are you cawing?"

The old woman answered: "At you, my dear—at you."

It had become too painful to sit with the old woman any longer. Alexandra Ivanovna went to her own room. She sat down before the open window and listened to two voices at the gate.

"It simply won't stop whining!" said a low and harsh voice.

"And uncle, did you see—?" asked an agreeable young tenor.

Alexandra Ivanovna recognized in this last the voice of the curly-headed, somewhat red, freckled-faced lad who lived in the same court.

A brief and depressing silence followed. Then she heard a hoarse and harsh voice say suddenly: "Yes, I saw. It's very large—and white. Lies near the bathhouse, and bays at the moon."

The voice gave her an image of the man, of his shovel-shaped beard, his low, furrowed forehead, his small, piggish eyes, and his spread-out fat legs.

"And why does it bay, uncle?" asked the agreeable voice.

And again the hoarse voice did not reply at once.

"Certainly to no good purpose—and where it came from is more than I can say."

"Do you think, uncle, it may be a were-wolf?" asked the agreeable voice.

"I should not advise you to investigate," replied the hoarse voice.

She could not quite understand what these words implied, nor did she wish to think of them. She did not feel inclined to listen further. What was the sound and significance of human words to *her?*

The moon looked straight into her face and persistently called her and tormented her. Her heart was restless with a dark longing, and she could not sit still.

Alexandra Ivanovna quickly undressed herself. Naked, all white, she silently stole through the passage; she then opened the outer door—there was no one on the step or outside—and ran quickly across the court and the vegetable garden, and reached the bath-house. The sharp contact of her body with the cold air and her feet with the cold ground gave her pleasure. But soon her body was warm.

She lay down in the grass, on her stomach. Then, raising herself on her elbows, she lifted her face toward the pale, brooding moon, and gave a long-drawn-out whine.

"Listen, uncle, it is whining," said the curly-haired lad at the gate.

The agreeable tenor voice trembled perceptibly.

"Whining again, the accursed one," said the hoarse, harsh voice slowly.

They rose from the bench. The gate latch clicked

They went silently across the courtyard and the vegetable garden, the two of them. The older man, black-bearded and powerful. walked in front, a gun

in his hand. The curly-headed lad followed tremblingly, and looked constantly behind.

Near the bathhouse, in the grass, lay a huge white dog, whining piteously. Its head, black on the crown, was raised to the moon, which pursued its way in the cold sky; its hind legs were strangely thrown backward, while the front ones, firm and straight, pressed hard against the ground.

In the pale green and unreal light of the moon it seemed enormous, so huge a dog was surely never seen on earth. It was thick and fat. The black spot, which began at the head and stretched in uneven strands down the entire spine, seemed like a woman's loosened hair. No tail was visible, presumably it was turned under. The fur on the body was so short that in the distance the dog seemed wholly naked, and its hide shone dimly in the moonlight, so that altogether it resembled the body of a nude woman, who lay in the grass and bayed at the moon.

The man with the black beard took aim. The curly-haired lad crossed himself and mumbled something.

The discharge of a rifle sounded in the night air. The dog gave a groan, jumped up on its hind legs, became a naked woman, who, her body covered with blood, started to run, all the while groaning, weeping and raising cries of distress.

The black-bearded one and the curly-haired one threw themselves in the grass, and began to moan in wild terror.

THE DOCTOR

By MICHAEL ARTZIBASHEV

I.

ACCOMPANIED by a taciturn policeman, the Doctor went through empty streets where the wet pavement reflected his long figure as in a dim, broken glass. Behind the walls bare boughs were tossing in the wind that howled round iron roofs and dashed icy raindrops like splinters in the face. When for a short while its fury abated and there was silence, a sound of distant firing could be distinctly heard; rifle-shots, singly, and then again in rapid succession. Southwards, behind the dark shadow of the cathedral there was a faint glow which lit up the low hanging clouds, making them look like huge dun-colored reptiles.

"Whereabouts are they shooting?" asked the Doctor, thrusting his hands up his sleeves and looking down at his feet.

"That I don't know," replied the policeman, but from the tone of his voice the Doctor perceived that he knew and would not say.

"Is it on the outskirts of the town?" persisted the Doctor, clenching his teeth with rage.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said the man in the same tone. "We really must go faster, sir."

"What a damned idiot!" thought the Doctor, quickening his pace.

Again the wind blew in gusts; and again, when there was a lull, the same distant sound of firing was audible.

"But who shot the Chief Constable?" asked the Doctor, as he listened anxiously to the firing.

"One of those Jews, probably," replied the policeman in the same callous tone.

"With what?"

"With a revolver. He shot and wounded him."

"Why?"

"That I don't know."

This curt, monotonous reply made all further questioning futile. The Doctor literally felt as if his fury would choke him. He was convinced that the Police Superintendent had been wounded by one of a Jewish gang, a secret Self-Defence Society, upon which the Cossacks had been ordered to fire. He pictured to himself a disorderly band of terrified men, powerless and badly armed, who were being gradually massacred with pitiless precision. So revolting to him was the scene, and so clearly did he seem to see it, that he longed to stop suddenly and say to the policeman roughly:

"Well, let him die like a dog! A dog deserves a dog's death!"

But he managed to control himself.

"I have no right to behave like that," he thought. "I am a doctor, not a judge." Although this reason seemed irrefutable, he furthermore reflected, "Besides, one can't hit a man that's down."

The policeman walked close behind him, and to be followed by this bleak, monotonous figure became at last intolerable.

"I think they might have sent me horses," he said at last. His voice trembled, and he was amazed at having made such a foolish protest.

"The horses are all engaged. In the town they are looking everywhere for doctors. I hoped to be able to fetch you in a droshky, sir, but there's not a damned one to got. We must go a bit quicker, sir!"

II.

SEVERAL policemen and two mounted Cossacks were stationed in front of the Chief Constable's house. The horses tossed their heads, and their tails were blown sideways by the wind. With their rifles slung across their saddles, the Cossacks sat there motionless, each looking as if he were not a living man but an inanimate part of the horse. As the Doctor approached, the policeman silently made way for him. A sergeant in a grey cloak saluted and asked:

"What about the doctor? Have you got one?"

"Yes, I've got one," was the policeman's triumphant answer, as he ran forward and opened the door.

"This way, if you please, sir!"

The hall was in darkness, but from a side-room a streak of light fell across the floor. A fat inspector came out of this room, in which other policemen and a smart-looking officer could be seen.

"Well, have you got a doctor?" asked the police-sergeant.

"Yes," replied the sergeant in the grey cloak.

The Doctor said nothing, but frowned as one who, perplexed and helpless, had been suddenly involved in an unpleasant business and who saw no way out of it. For a long while he fidgeted with his muffler before taking off his overcoat and goloshes. Then he removed his glasses, which he proceeded to polish with his handkerchief with unnecessary slowness and deliberation.

Just at this moment he recollected how in his student-days he was once obliged to enter a house where shortly before he had received his *congé*, owing to some misunderstanding or other. How ashamed he felt! To walk almost caused him physical pain. Such were his sensations now. He coughed nervously, raised his eyebrows, looked over the rims of his glasses, and awkwardly entered the lighted room.

"Where is the patient?" he asked irritably, without looking at anyone. Indeed he strove to avoid the expectant glances directed towards him. He only saw that the officer of gendarmes was the same one who shortly before had searched his own house.

"This way, doctor! This way, please," said the Inspector hoarsely.

A graceful woman hurried forward, her feet becoming entangled in the folds of her dress. She had large black eyes that looked the larger for being tear-stained. Such was her beauty that the Doctor involuntarily looked at her in admiration and surprise.

"Platon Mikhailovitch, where is the doctor?" she asked in a voice choked with emotion.

"Here is the doctor, Emma Vasilievna! Calm yourself! It will be all right now, and we shall manage to set him on his feet," said the Inspector in that kindly, familiar tone which stalwart men often adopt when speaking to beautiful women.

Seizing the doctor by both hands, she looked him full in the face with wide-opened eyes and said:

"For God's sake, doctor, help me! This way, quick! He's in such a shocking state. They've wounded him in the stomach. Oh. do come!"

Then she began to sob, covering her face with her soft, pink hands.

"Emma Vasilievna, don't distress yourself like that! There's no need for it!" cried the burly Inspector, with a depreciative gesture.

"Pray be calm, madam," added the Doctor gently, being softened, now, by pity. Yet, as he spoke, he glanced at her hands and remembered what some one had told him that very day—told him how they had ripped up pregnant Jewesses and stuffed them with feathers from their bedding . . .

"Why did you not send for some other medical man?" he asked in an undertone, without looking up.

Her eyes flashed in surprise. "My God, who else is there that we could have summoned? You are the only Russian doctor in the whole town. I could not have sent for a Jew. They are all so bitterly hostile to him! Oh, Doctor!"

The Inspector came nearer, and the Doctor understood why he moved. He looked around angrily, blinking his little eyes. "Very well, then; where is the patient?"

"Here, here, Doctor!" exclaimed the lady, as she caught up her gown and hurriedly offered to lead the way.

"Perhaps you will want help," suggested the Inspector.

"I want nobody," replied the Doctor sharply, glad of an opportunity to be rude. He quickly followed the lady through two dark rooms, presumably the dining-room and *salon,* for the Doctor fancied he could see a white table on which a tea-urn still stood, pictures, a grand piano, dark, yet gleaming in the dusk,

and large mirrors. They walked alternately on polished flooring and soft carpets. Everywhere there was the strange, indefinable aroma of wealth and luxury which the Doctor found intolerably oppressive. He could now hear a sound that was familiar to him, the labored, stertorous breathing of a dying man, and this impressed upon him the fact that he had a duty to perform.

It was he who now walked first and entered the sick-room. It smelt strongly of sal-ammoniac and iodoform. A Red Cross Sister of Mercy was standing beside the bed, and on the blood-stained mattress, at full length, with his chest curiously thrust out, lay the Chief Constable. His blue trousers were unbuttoned and had been drawn down, disclosing his naked stomach, which heaved convulsively.

The Doctor looked sternly at his patient and said: "Bring a light, please, Sister!"

But the lady herself rushed to the table and brought the lamp. When the light fell on her it gave her eyes a lurid brilliance as she looked first at her prostrate husband and then at the Doctor's face like a terrified child.

The Doctor bent down. "Oh, it's there! I see," he muttered to himself.

Just below the ribs there was a little dark red hole. With two fingers he cautiously pressed the edges of the wound when the body became at once convulsed, and a wild, hideous scream came from somewhere at the back of the Doctor's elbow. Lamp in hand, the lady became so terribly agitated that instinctively the Doctor put out his hands to prevent her from falling. "She's going to faint," he thought.

"My dear lady," he said, "don't give way like this. I think you had better retire. You cannot do anything here." Thus persuading her, he at the same time took hold of her arm.

She stared at him, wild-eyed. "No, no! It's nothing, nothing! Oh, be quick, Doctor; for God's sake, be quick!"

But the Doctor firmly led her away, and she obediently left the room.

In the *salon* the maid lit a lamp, and in the soft light the polished surface of the furniture and the gilt frames of the pictures were dimly discernible. Almost forcibly the Doctor led the lady to a couch. The Inspector's round, red face peered in at the door.

"Don't come back, if you please. Stay here. The Sister of Mercy will be quite sufficient, and I am going to send for an assistant-surgeon at once. It is too much for you; so please stay here."

"We have already sent for the assistant-surgeon," said the Inspector in the doorway.

She listened, still gazing at the Doctor with her dark, shining eyes. It was as if there was something that she did not understand. Directly the Doctor moved, with cat-like swiftness she caught at his hand.

"Doctor, tell me, for God's sake, tell me the truth! There's no danger, is there? He's not going to die?" she faltered.

The Doctor felt more and more how terrible she was suffering, and his pity for her increased.

"Ah, well," he thought, as if replying to his own indefinite emotions, "every one for himself! This outrage is just as horrible as any other. Of course to her he is the dearest thing in the whole world, and he

loves life as much as anybody else. It's my business to help all; not to look upon some patients as guilty, and upon others as innocent."

"Be calm, madam," he said kindly. "Please God, all will go well. The wound is certainly serious, but you have sent for me in good time. Yes; it is lucky that you did so," he added with emphasis.

Although the uncertainty was as great as ever, since he had done nothing so far, the wife's dark eyes grew softer. They no longer glittered feverishly, but expressed heartfelt gratitude. She sank down, strengthless, on the couch.

"Thank you, doctor," she murmured. Her voice had a caressing quality. "Go back. I won't disturb you any more. But if ... if ... you'll call me, won't you, Doctor?"

Against his will the Doctor glanced once more at this enchanting vision of shimmering lace, raven black hair, roseate limbs, and rustling silk. "How beautiful she is!" he thought. "And she's the wife, the bedfellow of that brute! Strange, isn't it? But that's just how things are in this world!"

On entering the bedroom the Doctor closed the door. "Sister," he said to the Red Cross nurse seated beside the bed, "will you send for the assistant-surgeon, and to my house for my instruments? They'll know what I want. Or, perhaps I had better write a note."

"Very well, sir," replied the nurse, rising, "but that has been done already, I believe."

"And see to it," added the Doctor, "that no one comes in here. The patient requires rest. Do not admit his wife."

When left alone with the patient the Doctor care-

fully placed the lamp on a little table near the bed and sat down beside it. The Chief Constable still lay there without moving. His face with its heavy moustache, his hands with rings on the fingers, his legs in big varnished top-boots, were all equally motionless. Only the red, bare stomach heaved convulsively.

The Doctor knew what had to done and what could be done. A single glance had sufficed to assure him that so robust a patient, despite the gravity of the wound, would recover if no complications set in, and if aid were given in time, so that, not unnaturally, he felt impatient. He took the patient's hand to feel his pulse. A powerful hand once, maybe, covered with reddish hair, but now as pliable as india-rubber. The heavy breathing suddenly ceased. The Doctor looked intently at the patient and perceived that he was recovering consciousness.

"Well, how do you feel?" he asked.

The Chief Constable did not reply. As before, his stomach rose and fell, and his eyes through their half-closed lids had a dull, lifeless expression.

The Doctor began to think that he must have been mistaken, when just at that moment the moustache quivered and a strange voice, coming as it were from depths within the patient's body, said gently and distinctly, "It hurts me. . . Doctor . . . I am dying . . . Where is Emma . . . my wife?"

"I have sent your wife away. It is too much for her. You won't die. There's not the least fear of that. You'll be all right," said the Doctor in the calm tone of assurance he always adopted when addressing patients.

"It hurts me!" repeated the Chief Constable in a fainter voice, and he sighed.

"Never mind! We shall soon put that right. You must have a little patience," replied the Doctor in the same soothing tone. But his patient had become unconscious again, and it was distressing to hear his labored breathing beneath his tawny moustache.

The Doctor looked at the clock, sighed, and then rose. The wound had been washed by the Sister of Mercy, and for the moment nothing could be done. He became more and more uneasy as he sat there in this heated atmosphere, a prey to vague, gloomy thoughts. He went to the window and, opening the small one, looked down at the street. The fresh air as it came in and touched his forehead was reviving. The street was empty and silent. Then, as he, listening, looked out again the distant sound of firing came to him on the wind.

. . . Bang! . . . Bang bang! . . . Bang!

"My God! When on earth will it stop?" he muttered.

As if in reply, he heard the hoarse gurgling of the patient in the room behind him. "This fellow," thought he, "what a beautiful, charming wife he's got! He's strong and healthy, and surrounded with comfort of every kind. His children, too, are healthy, happy children, no doubt. But instead of being content with such good fortune, instead of enjoying his life and prizing the joy that was his, he must needs do such atrocious things! For him such hideous deeds are utterly unnecessary and uncalled for. He must know what misery they cause. And yet, in spite of it all . . ."

The wind howled more furiously; and again from the bed came the sound of labored breathing.

The Doctor listened anxiously. He fancied that he could hear a scream as he looked right and left through

the small window opening on to the street. Immediately opposite he could read on a large white signboard the words *Fish Depot*. Suddenly he recollected how some six or seven months ago he had been summoned to attend a tradesman who was suffering from a slight paralytic stroke. The fat fellow lay on the sofa like a sow that had just been slaughtered. His face was blue as that of a corpse; he was gasping for breath; and every now and then his limbs twitched convulsively. At the time the Doctor did everything that was possible, sitting up all night with the patient, and eventually effecting a cure. Now, it was this very same tradesman, Voskoboynikof by name, who three days ago had collected a horde of drunken wretches who could hardly be called men, and, after treating them all to vodka, had distributed red flags among them. His fat, red face shone with excitement as he spluttered out a lot of senseless words that had now resulted in all the bestial outrages and inhuman massacres.

"There it is!" thought the Doctor. "If I hadn't cured him when I did, dozens and dozens of poor wretches might now be alive! Why did I ever do it?"

He left the window, perplexed and confused, as if trying vainly to recollect something. Going to the bedside, he scrutinized the pale, motionless face of his patient. At times, if the breathing grew more labored, broad white teeth became visible beneath the reddish moustache; and then the whole countenance assumed a cunning expression as that of a wild beast. A wave of fury and disgust came over the Doctor as he watched.

"I must control myself," he thought. "I have no right to let myself be influenced by personal feelings.

It stands to reason that I could not possibly go away and leave a dying man. Yet why not! Why shouldn't I leave him to die? No, no! Impossible!" The note of assurance rang false, emphatic though it was. "Damn it all!" he thought angrily. "What does it mean? Why doesn't somebody come?" Then he perceived that he really only desired "somebody" to come in order to counteract his own personal aversion, and to enable him to overcome it.

For some reason or other he felt drawn to look out of the window again. Gazing into the darkness, he seemed to see once more a hideous sight that he had witnessed a day or two ago. The corpse of a young man had been brought into the hospital. The face was so horribly mutilated that identification seemed impossible. It was one huge grisly clot of blood and mire, with tufts on it of soft, fair hair. Then he remembered a girl student, a little Jewess whom he used to meet almost every morning when on his way to the hospital. She was a bright, graceful girl, and her neat brown dress, black apron, high boots, and glossy hair gave her a charming appearance. For the jaded physician it was refreshing to encounter this sweet embodiment of youth, as sweet to him as the first bright vision of spring. She, too, had been murdered. Her body was the second that he had seen on that fateful day. In a certain street, not far from a smoking house of which the door and windows had been battered in, amid the dirt and wreckage on the roadway, he had observed a strange white object. Having outraged her, the pillagers had stripped her stark naked and flung her out of the window, where, as the Doctor afterwards learnt, she had dragged herself along

through the dirt on one leg. Her little breasts had been cut by the sharp stones. Her dishevelled hair was stiff and caked with mud. One white leg, broken and useless, lay bent beneath her on the stones.

Tears for the first time now rose to his eyes, wetting the rims of his glasses. Suddenly this awful picture, as in some hideous dream, gave place to that of Voskoboynikof's bloated, shapeless visage with its bloodshot, goggling eyes and gaping mouth ringed by a horde of ruffians, maddened by vodka and lust.

"No, they are not human beings!" he said aloud, composed now, and in a tone of conviction.

The face of the murdered girl had disappeared.

Once more he left the window and went back towards the patient's bedside, but as soon as he got to the middle of the room he turned sharply on his heel, and, without looking at the patient, waved his hand deprecatingly and went out.

"I cannot!" he said sorrowfully.

III.

In the *salon* he collided with the Sister of Mercy, and stood aside to let her pass. He was then in a strange, half-conscious condition, and later on had no recollection of what at that moment was passing through his mind. The Sister stopped and said reassuringly, as she looked up in his face:

"They have sent again, sir, to Timopheief and to the hospital."

The Doctor looked at her brow pensively, where little fluffy hairs were peeping out from under her white cap. Then he said:

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"Perhaps you want water or something? Shall I get some water?" she asked.

"Yes, yes, water! Of course," shouted the Doctor furiously, amazed at such an outburst on his part. For an instant he saw the look of astonishment on the Sister of Mercy's face. She was evidently offended. He wanted to speak, to offer some explanation of his conduct, but he could only wave his hand feebly as he went out. Through all the rooms he walked, conscious that the Chief Constable's wife was watching him in amazement and distress, though as she rose from the couch he did not see her. On reaching the ante-room he began to put on his overcoat with trembling hands. She followed him thither as with outstretched arms she exclaimed anxiously:

"Where are you going, Doctor? What is the matter?"

Behind her, his hands awkwardly extended, stood the Inspector, while above his head the face of the young officer could be seen. Then the Doctor, who had already put on his coat and goloshes, turned back, hat in hand, and went into the dining-room. He was very pale, and with his eyes fixed on the floor he said: "I cannot . . . You had better call in some one else . . ."

Her dark eyes grew wide with fear as she clasped her hands. "Doctor, what is the matter with you? Who is there that I can call in? As I have already told you, we've sent everywhere. You are the only one . . . What does it mean? Are you not well yourself?"

The Doctor uttered a stifled cry, for the words in answer momentarily failed him. "Ugh! . . . Not at all! I am well . . . I am perfectly well!" he exclaimed testily, trembling all over.

A death-like pallor overspread her features. She

gazed at him in mute amazement. Her silence and her glassy stare told him that she had understood.

"What does this mean, Doctor?" began the young officer in a hectoring tone. But she held him back.

"You won't save my husband because he . . ." Her lips quivered. Her voice was almost inaudible.

"Yes!" This was the curt reply that the Doctor had intended to give. But the little word stuck in his throat. He merely shrugged his shoulders, and his fingers twitched.

"Look here, sir, what . . ." cried the Inspector angrily. Then, for some reason or other, he stopped, and looked about him in confusion.

There was a brief silence. The lady gazed dispairingly at the Doctor, who kept his eyes stubbornly fixed on one of the little feet of the table.

"Doctor!" she pleaded at last in a voice full of anguish.

He quickly looked up, but made no reply. Within him at that moment a painful, secret conflict was in progress. It seemed so utterly criminal and unjust to leave a dying man like this and to refuse to help her in her dispair; to go away, and before going to condemn to death a helpless, suffering fellow-creature.

At this awful juncture he strove to find some outlet, some way of escape. But there was none. At one moment it seemed that the simplest way for him would be to go back and give help and consolation. Then, in another instant, clear, obvious as justice itself, his duty appeared to be exactly the reverse. He ought to go. To which prompting should he yield?

"Doctor!" she murmured in the same supplicating tone, as she came close to him and held out her arms.

Quite apart from and outside this train of thought, he suddenly reflected that he was getting warm in his thick overcoat, and might catch cold if he went out into the street. Then, it seemed to him as if he had already taken off his coat, and was at the bedside looking at that face with its tawny moustache and large white teeth.

"No; it's impossible!" he thought; and again before his mental vision there floated the hideous picture of the young man's battered head and of the girl-student's naked limb. In his ears rang those words spoken by that man he knew: "They ripped them up and then stuffed them with feathers from the bedding." A paroxysm of wrath again assailed him and he cried hoarsely: "No, I cannot!"

Waving her aside, he went to the door, when she suddenly shrieked, and he stopped.

"You dare not go! It's your duty to stop and save my husband! I will denounce you! You shall suffer for this! Platon Mikhailovitch!"

The Inspector and the young officer with two policemen advanced, all ready at a word from the lady in her silks and laces, to seize him. Standing in front of him, her slender hands clenched and her eyes round and flashing, she leaned forward.

"You dare not!" she hissed. "Do you know, I will compel you by force to remain . . . !"

"Ivanof!" cried the Inspector, turning very red.

"Aha! Ivanof, indeed!" replied the Doctor in a strange, deliberate tone, as he relinquished his hold of the door-handle and faced her.

"You mean to threaten me, do you? Very well. If I act in this way it is because I have good reasons

for doing so. I am obliged to stop, am I? Who says that, pray? Let me tell you that I am obliged to do nothing that disgusts me. Your husband is a brute, and if he is suffering—well, it's a pity he can't be made to suffer more. Why should I save him? Why should I save the life of a man who—Do you know what you are saying? You ought to be ashamed of yourself! How can you possibly plead for such a man? Ah! No, no! Let him die! Let him die like a dog! I won't move a finger to help him. Arrest me, if you like! We will soon see about that!"

His thin little voice rose almost to a scream, and his small myopic eyes twinkled defiantly. In this moment he tasted the sweetness of revenge. The vent for all his pent-up grief and impotent fury had been found. His features were contorted by a sardonic smile of which he was himself unconscious. In his anger he saw nothing of what was going on.

The lady in her laces tottered helplessly and almost fell. Her face became ghastly white and all traces of its beauty disappeared. Her lips quivered, as in mute despair she held out limp, supplicating hands.

"Doctor! Doctor!"

He stopped short in his tirade and looked at her in amazement, as if he had quite forgotten her presence.

"I . . . I know, Doctor . . ." she stammered, "but . . . Doctor . . . did he himself . . . actually . . .?"

"Ah! yet if he didn't, that is no justification," he muttered.

"I know! I know! But now, Doctor, now he'll die!"

"Yes, but . . ." began the Doctor, growing angry again.

She cut him short, as she caught hold of his coat-sleeve. "Ah! Doctor, I love him, and I can't live without him. See how much I suffer, too! Oh Doctor, in the name of all the Saints! Have you no pity? . . . our children . . . ?" Suddenly she fell on her knees.

"Emma Vasilievna! What are you doing?" cried the Inspector and the officer, rushing forward. But she thrust them aside.

So strange and unlooked for was this attitude of hers that for a moment the Doctor staggered backwards. She crawled towards him on her knees as her rustling silk skirts trailed along the floor; and at the sight of this frail woman in her anguish the Doctor felt a sharp pang at his heart.

"Doctor! Doctor! For God's sake, stop!"

He was trembling in every limb, and for the space of a second he felt that he could not resist. But just then the Inspector seized his arm roughly, and in another access of fury he shook himself free and rushed to the door.

She seized his sleeve, shrieking, but, loosing her hold, fell down in a swoon on the floor, a rigid mass of rose-pink silk and tangled hair. They lifted her up, yet not before the Doctor, as he flung open the door, had caught a glimpse of her lying there, prone. They rushed after him, and the Inspector called out the soldiers. He could hear the tramp of their feet on the stairs below. Trembling, aghast, he clutched the banisters and fled, while rings of fire danced before his eyes.

A FATHER

By ANTON TCHEKOV

"I DON'T deny it; I have had a drop too much . . . Forgive me; the fact is I happened to pass by the public, and, all owing to the heat, I drank a couple of bottles. It's hot, brother!"

Old Musátoff took a rag from his pocket, and wiped the sweat from his clean-shaven, dissipated face.

"I have come to you, Bórenka, angel mine, just for a minute," he continued, looking at his son, "on very important business. Forgive me if I am in the way. Tell me, my soul . . . do you happen to have ten roubles to spare till Tuesday? You understand me . . . yesterday I ought to have paid for the rooms, but the money question . . . you understand. Not a kopeck!"

Young Musatoff went out silently, and behind the door began a whispered consultation with his housekeeper and the colleagues in the Civil Service with whom he shared the villa. In a minute he returned, and silently handed his father a ten-rouble note. The old gentleman took it carelessly, and without looking at it thrust it into his pocket, and said:

"*Merci!* And how is the world using you? We haven't met for ages."

"Yes, it is a long time—since All Saints' Day."

"Five times I did my best to get over to you, but never could get time. First one matter, then another . . . simply ruination! But, Boris, I may confess it, I am not telling the truth . . . I lie . . . I always

lie. Don't believe me, Bórenka. I promised to let you have the ten roubles back on Tuesday; don't believe that either! Don't believe a single word I say! I have no business matters at all, simply idleness, drink, and shame to show myself in the street in this get-up. But you, Bórenka, will forgive me. Three times I sent the girl for money, and wrote you piteous letters. For the money, thanks! But don't believe the letters . . . I lied. It hurts me to plunder you in this way, angel mine; I know that you can hardly make both ends meet, and live—so to say—on locusts. But with impudence like mine you can do nothing. A rascal who only shows his face when he wants money! . . . Forgive me, Bórenka, I tell you the plain truth, because I cannot look with indifference upon your angel face . . ."

A minute passed in silence. The old man sighed deeply, and began:

"Let us make the supposition, brother, that you were to treat me to a glass of beer."

Without a word, Boris again went out and whispered outside the door. The beer was brought in. At the sight of the bottle Musátoff enlivened, and suddenly changed his tone.

"The other day I was at the races," he began, making frightened faces. "There were three of us, and together we put in the totalisator a three-rouble note on Shustri. And good luck to Shustri! With the risk of one rouble we each got back thirty-two. It is a noble sport. The old woman always pitches into me about the races, but I go. I love it!"

Boris, a young fair-haired man, with a sad, apathetic face, walked from corner to corner, and listened

silently. When Musátoff interrupted his story in order to cough, he went up to him and said:

"The other day, papa, I bought myself a new pair of boots, but they turned out too small. I wish you would take them off my hands. I will let you have them cheap!"

"I shall be charmed!" said the old man, with a grimace. "Only for the same price—without any reduction."

"Very well . . . We will regard that as a loan also."

Boris stretched his arm under the bed, and pulled out the new boots. Old Musátoff removed his own awkward brown shoes—plainly someone else's—and tried the new boots on.

"Like a shot!" he exclaimed. "Your hand on it. . . . I'll take them. On Tuesday, when I get my pension, I'll send the money . . . But I may as well confess, I lie." He resumed his former piteous tone. "About the races I lied, and about my pension I lie. You are deceiving me, Bórenka . . . I can see very well through your magnanimous pretext. I can see through you! The boots are too small for you because your heart is to large! Akh, Borya, Borya, I understand it . . . and I feel it!"

"You have gone to your new rooms?" asked Boris, with the object of changing the subject.

"Yes, brother, into the new rooms . . . Every month we shift. With a character like the old woman's we cannot stay anywhere."

"I have been at the old rooms. Bút now I want to ask you to come to the country. In your state of health it will do you good to be in the fresh air."

Musátoff waved his hand. "The old woman wouldn't let me go, and myself I don't care to. A hundred times you have tried to drag me out of the

pit . . . I have tried to drag myself . . . but the devil an improvement! Give it up! In the pit I'll die as I have lived. At this moment I sit in front of you and look at your angel face . . . yet I am being dragged down into the pit. It's destiny, brother! You can't get flies from a dunghill to a rose bush. No . . . Well, I'm off . . . it's getting dark."

"If you wait a minute, we'll go together. I have business in town myself."

Musátoff and his son put on their coats, and went out. By the time they had found a droshky it was quite dark, and the windows were lighted up.

"I know I'm ruining you, Bórenka," stammered the father. "My poor, poor children! What an affliction to be cursed with such a father! Bórenka, angel mine, I cannot lie when I see your face. Forgive me! . . . To what a pass, my God, has impudence brought me! This very minute I have taken your money, and shamed you with my drunken face; your brothers also I spunge on and put to shame. If you had seen me yesterday! I won't hide anything, Bórenka. Yesterday our neighbors—all the rascality, in short—came in to see the old woman. I drank with them, and actually abused you behind your back, and complained that you had neglected me. I tried, you understand, to get the drunken old woman to pity me, and played the part of an unhappy father. That's my besetting sin; when I want to hide my faults, I heap them on the heads of my innocent children . . . But I cannot lie to you, Bórenka, or hide things. I came to you in pride, but when I had felt your kindness and all-mercifulness, my conscience turned upside down."

"Yes, father, but let us talk about something else."

"Mother of God, what children I have!" continued the old man, paying no attention to his son. "What a glory the Lord has sent me! Such children should be sent not to me, a good-for-nothing, but to a real man with a soul and a heart. I am not worthy of it!"

Musátoff took off his cap and crossed himself piously thrice.

"Glory be to Thee, O God!" he sighed, looking around as if seeking an ikon. "Astonishing, priceless children! Three sons I have, and all of them the same! Sober, serious, diligent—and what intellects! Cabman, what intellects! Gregory alone has as much brains as ten ordinary men. French . . .and German . . . he speaks both . . . and you never get tired of listening. Children, children mine, I cannot believe that you are mine at all! I don't believe it! You, Bórenka, are a very martyr! I am ruining you . . . before long I shall have ruined you. You give me money without end, although you know very well that not a kopeck goes on necessaries. Only the other day I sent you a piteous letter about my illness . . . But I lied; the money was wanted to buy rum. Yet you gave it to me sooner than offend your old father with a refusal. All this I know . . . and feel . . . Grisha also is a martyr. On Thursday, angel mine, I went to his office, drunk, dirty, ragged . . . smelling of vodka like a cellar. I went straight up to him and began in my usual vulgar slang, although he was with the other clerks, the head of the department—and petitioners all around! Disgraced him for his whole life! . . . Yet he never got the least confused, only a little pale; he smiled, and got up from his desk as if nothing were wrong—even introduced me to his colleagues. And he brought me

the whole way home, without a word of reproach! I spunge on him even worse than on you!

"Then take your brother, Sasha! There's another martyr! Married to a colonel's daughter, moving in a circle of aristocrats, with a dot . . . and everything else . . . He, at any rate, you would think would have nothing to do with me. Well, brother, what does he do? When he gets married the very first thing after the wedding he comes to me with his young wife, and pays me the first visit . . . to my lair, to the lair . . . I swear to God!"

The old man began to sob, but soon laughed again.

"At the very moment, as the fates would have it, when we were eating scraped radishes and kvas, and frying fish, with a stench in the room enough to stink out the devil. I was lying drunk as usual, and the old woman jumps up and greets them with a face the color of beefsteak . . . in one word, a scandal. But Sasha bore it all."

"Yes, our Sasha is a good man," said Boris.

"Incomparable! You are all of you gold, both you and Grisha, and Sasha and Sonia. I torture, pester, disgrace, and spunge on you, yet in my whole life I have never heard a word of reproach, or seen a single sidelong look. If you had a decent father it would be different, but . . . You have never had anything from me but evil. I am a wicked, dissolute man . . . Now, thank God, I have quieted down, and have no character left in me, but formerly, when you were little children, I had a character and no mistake. Whatever I said or did seemed to me gospel! I remember! I used to come back late from the club, drunk and irritated, and begin to abuse your poor mother about the household ex-

penses. I would keep on at her all night, and imagine that she was in the wrong; in the morning you would get up and go to school, but all the time I would keep on showing her that I had a character. Heaven rest her soul, how I tortured the poor martyr! And when you came back from school and found me asleep you weren't allowed your dinner until I got up. And after dinner the same music! P'rhaps you remember. May God forbid that anyone else should be cursed with such a father! He sent you to me as a blessing. A blessing! Continue in this way, children, to the end. Honor thy father that thy days may be long in the land! For your goodness Heaven will reward you with long life! Cabman, stop!"

Musátoff alighted and ran into a beerhouse. After a delay of half an hour he returned, grunted tipsily, and took his seat.

"And where is Sonia now?" he asked. "Still at the boarding-school?"

"No, she finished last May. She lives now with Sasha's aunt."

"What?" exclaimed the old man. "Left school? And a glorious girl, God bless her—went with her brothers. *Akh,* Bórenka, no mother, no one to console her! Tell me, Bórenka, does she know . . . does she know that I am alive? Eh?"

Boris did not answer. Five minutes passed in deep silence. The old man sobbed, wiped his face with a rag, and said:

"I love her, Bórenka! She was the only daughter, and in old age there is no consolation like a daughter. If I could only see her for a moment. Tell me, Bórenka, may I?"

"Of course, whenever you like."

"And she won't object?"

"Of course not; she herself went to look for you."

"I swear to God! There is a nest of angels! Cabman, eh? Arrange it, Bórenka, angel! Of course she is a young lady now, *delicatesse* . . . *consommé,* and all that sort of thing in the noble style. So I can't see her in this get-up. But all this, Bórenka, we can arrange. For three days I won't taste a drop—that'll bring my accursed drunken snout into shape. Then I will go to your place and put on a suit of your clothes, and get a shave and have my hair cut. Then you will drive over and take me with you? Is it agreed?"

"All right."

"Cabman, stop!"

The old man jumped out of the carriage and ran into another beershop. Before they reached his lodgings he visited two more; and every time his son waited patiently. When, having dismissed the cabman, they crossed the broad, muddy yard to the rooms of the "old woman," Musátoff looked confused and guilty, grunted timidly, and smacked his lips.

"Bórenka," he began, in an imploring voice, "if the old woman says anything of that kind to you—you understand—don't pay any attention to her. And be polite to her. She is very ignorant and impertinent, but not a bad sort at bottom. She has a good, warm heart."

They crossed the yard and entered a dark hall. The door squeaked, the kitchen smelt, the samovar smoked, and shrill voices were heard . . . While they passed through the kitchen Boris noticed only the black smoke, a rope with washing spread out, and the chimney of a samovar, through the chinks of which burst golden sparks.

"This is my cell," said Musátoff, bowing his head, and showing his son into a little, low-ceilinged room, filled with atmosphere unbearable from proximity to the kitchen. At a table sat three women, helping one another to food. Seeing the guest, they looked at one another and stopped eating.

"Well, did you get it?" asked one, apparently "the old woman," roughly.

"Got it, got it," stammered the old man. "Now, Boris, do us the honor! Sit down! With us, brother—young man—everything is simple... We live in a simple way."

Musátoff fussed about without any visible reason. He was ashamed before his son, and at the same time apparently wished to bear himself before the women as a man of importance and a forsaken, unhappy father.

"Yes, brother mine—young man—we live simply, without show-off," he stammered. "We are plain folk, young man . . . We are not like you . . . we do not trouble to throw dust in other people's eyes. No!... A drop of vodka, eh?"

One of the women, ashamed of drinking before a stranger, sighed and said:

"I must have another glass after these mushrooms. After mushrooms, whether you like it or not, you have to drink . . . Ivan Gerasiuitch, ask him . . . perhaps he'll have a drink."

"Drink, young man!" said Musátoff, without looking at his son. "Wines and liqueurs we don't keep, brother, we live plainly."

"I'm afraid our arrangements don't suit him," sighed the old woman.

"Leave him alone, leave him alone, he'll drink all right."

To avoid giving offence to his father, Boris took a

glass, and drained it in silence. When the samovar was brought in he, silently and with a melancholy air—again to please his father—drank two cups of atrocious tea. And without a word he listened while the "old woman" lamented the fact that in this world you will sometimes find cruel and godless children who forsake their parents in their old age.

"I know what you are thinking," said the drunken old man, falling into his customary state of excitement. "You are thinking that I have fallen in the world, that I have dirtied myself, that I am an object of pity! But in my mind this simple life is far more natural than yours, young man. I do not need for anything . . . and I have no intention of humiliating myself . . . I can stand a lot . . . but tolerance is at an end when a brat of a boy looks at me with pity."

When he had drunk his tea, he cleaned a herring, and squeezed onion on it with such vigor that tears of emotion sprang into his eyes. He spoke again of the totalisator, of his winnings, and of a hat of Panama straw for which he had paid sixteen roubles the day before. He lied with the same appetite with which he had drunk and devoured the herring. His son sat silently for more than an hour and then rose to take leave.

"I wouldn't think of detaining you," said Musátoff stiffly. "I ask your pardon, young man, for not living in the way to which you are accustomed."

He bristled up, sniffed with dignity, and winked to the women.

"Good-bye, young man!" he said, escorting his son into the hall. *"Attendez!"*

But in the hall, where it was quite dark, he suddenly pressed his face to his son's arm and sobbed.

"If I could only see Sóniushka!" he whispered. "Arrange it, Bórenka, angel mine! I will have a shave, and put on one of your suits . . . and make a severe face. I won't open my mouth while she's present. I won't say a word. I swear to God!"

He glanced timidly at the door, from behind which came the shrill voices of the women, smothered his sobs, and said in a loud voice:

"Well, good-bye, young man! *Attendez!*"

HER LOVER

By MAXIM GORKY

AN acquaintance of mine once told me the following story.

When I was a student at Moscow I happened to live alongside one of those ladies whose repute is questionable. She was a Pole, and they called her Teresa. She was a tallish, powerfully-built brunette, with black, bushy eyebrows and a large coarse face as if carved out by a hatchet—the bestial gleam of her dark eyes, her thick bass voice, her cabman-like gait and her immense muscular vigor, worthy of a fishwife, inspired me with horror. I lived on the top flight and her garret was opposite to mine. I never left my door open when I knew her to be at home. But this, after all, was a very rare occurrence. Sometimes I chanced to meet her on the staircase or in the yard, and she would smile upon me with a smile which seemed to me to be sly and cynical. Occasionally, I saw her drunk, with bleary eyes, tousled hair, and a particularly hideous grin. On such occasions she would speak to me.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Student!" and her stupid laugh would still further intensify my loathing of her. I should have liked to have changed my quarters in order to have avoided such encounters and greetings; but my little chamber was a nice one, and there was such a wide view from the window, and it was always so quiet in the street below—so I endured.

And one morning I was sprawling on my couch, trying to find some sort of excuse for not attending my

class, when the door opened, and the bass voice of Teresa, the loathsome, resounded from my threshold:

"Good health to you, Mr. Student!"

"What do you want?" I said. I saw that her face was confused and supplicatory . . . It was a very unusual sort of face for her.

"Sir! I want to beg a favor of you. Will you grant it me?"

I lay there silent, and thought to myself:

"Gracious! . . . Courage, my boy!"

"I want to send a letter home, that's what it is," she said; her voice was beseeching, soft, timid.

"Deuce take you!" I thought; but up I jumped, sat down at my table, took a sheet of paper, and said:

"Come here, sit down, and dictate!"

She came, sat down very gingerly on a chair, and looked at me with a guilty look.

"Well, to whom do you wish to write?"

"To Boleslav Kashput, at the town of Svyeptsyana, on the Warsaw Road . . ."

"Well, fire away!"

"My dear Boles . . . my darling . . . my faithful lover. May the Mother of God protect thee! Thou heart of gold, why hast thou not written for such a long time to thy sorrowing little dove, Teresa?"

I very nearly burst out laughing. "A sorrowing little dove!" more than five feet high, with fists a stone and more in weight, and as black a face as if the little dove had lived all its life in a chimney, and had never once washed itself! Restraining myself somehow, I asked:

"Who is this Bolest?"

"Boles, Mr. Student," she said, as if offended with

me for blundering over the name, "he is Boles—my young man."

"Young man!"

"Why are you so surprised, sir? Cannot I, a girl, have a young man?"

She? A girl? Well!

"Oh, why not?" I said. "All things are possible. And has he been your young man long?"

"Six years."

"Oh, ho!" I thought. "Well, let us write your letter . . ."

And I tell you plainly that I would willingly have changed places with this Boles if his fair correspondent had been not Teresa but something less than she.

"I thank you most heartily, sir, for your kind services," said Teresa to me, with a curtsey. "Perhaps *I* can show *you* some service, eh?"

"No, I most humbly thank you all the same."

"Perhaps, sir, your shirts or your trousers may want a little mending?"

I felt that this mastodon in petticoats had made me grow quite red with shame, and I told her pretty sharply that I had no need whatever of her services.

She departed.

A week or two passed away. It was evening. I was sitting at my window whistling and thinking of some expedient for enabling me to get away from myself. I was bored; the weather was dirty. I didn't want to go out, and out of sheer ennui I began a course of self-analysis and reflection. This also was dull enough work, but I didn't care about doing anything else. Then the door opened. Heaven be praised! Someone came in.

"Oh, Mr. Student, you have no pressing business, I hope?"

It was Teresa. Humph!

"No. What is it?"

"I was going to ask you, sir, to write me another letter."

"Very well! To Boles, eh?"

"No, this time it is from him."

"Wha-at?"

"Stupid that I am! It is not for me, Mr. Student, I beg your pardon. It is for a friend of mine, that is to say, not a friend but an acquaintance—a man acquaintance. He has a sweetheart just like me here, Teresa. That's how it is. Will you, sir, write a letter to this Teresa?

I looked at her—her face was troubled, her fingers were trembling. I was a bit fogged at first—and then I guessed how it was.

"Look here, my lady," I said, "there are no Boleses or Teresas at all, and you've been telling me a pack of lies. Don't you come sneaking about me any longer. I have no wish whatever to cultivate your acquaintance. Do you understand?"

And suddenly she grew strangely terrified and distraught; she began to shift from foot to foot without moving from the place, and spluttered comically, as if she wanted to say something and couldn't. I waited to see what would come of all this, and I saw and felt that, apparently, I had made a great mistake in suspecting her of wishing to draw me from the path of righteousness. It was evidently something very different.

"Mr. Student!" she began, and suddenly, waving her hand, she turned abruptly towards the door and

went out. I remained with a very unpleasant feeling in my mind. I listened. Her door was flung violently to—plainly the poor wretch was very angry . . . I thought it over, and resolved to go to her, and, inviting her to come in here, write everything she wanted.

I entered her apartment. I looked around. She was sitting at the table, leaning on her elbows, with her head in her hands.

"Listen to me," I said.

Now, whenever I come to this point in my story, I always feel horribly awkward and idiotic. Well, well!

"Listen to me," I said.

She leaped from her seat, came towards me with flashing eyes, and laying her hands on my shoulders, began to whisper, or rather to hum in her peculiar bass voice:

"Look you now! It's like this. There's no Boles at all, and there's no Teresa either. But what's that to you? Is it a hard thing for you to draw your pen over paper? Eh? Ah, and *you*, too! Still such a little fair-haired boy! There's nobody at all, neither Boles, nor Teresa, only me. There you have it, and much good may it do you!"

"Pardon me!" said I, altogether flabbergasted by such a reception, "what is it all about? There's no Boles, you say?"

"No. So it is."

"And no Teresa either?"

"And no Teresa. I'm Teresa."

I didn't understand it at all. I fixed my eyes upon her, and tried to make out which of us was taking leave of his or her senses. But she went again to the table,

searched about for something, came back to me, and said in an offended tone:

"If it was so hard for you to write to Boles, look, there's your letter, take it! Others will write for me."

I looked. In my hand was my letter to Boles. Phew!

"Listen, Teresa! What is the meaning of all this? Why must you get others to write for you when I have already written it, and you haven't sent it?"

"Sent it where?"

"Why, to this—Boles."

"There's no such person."

I absolutely did not understand it. There was nothing for me but to spit and go. Then she explained.

"What is it?" she said, still offended. "There's no such person, I tell you," and she extended her arms as if she herself did not understand why there should be no such person. "But I wanted him to be . . . Am I then not a human creature like the rest of them? Yes, yes, I know, I know, of course . . . Yet no harm was done to anyone by my writing to him that I can see . . ."

"Pardon me—to whom?"

"To Boles, of course."

"But he doesn't exist."

"Alas! alas! But what if he doesn't? He doesn't exist, but he *might!* I write to him, and it looks as if he did exist. And Teresa—that's me, and he replies to me, and then I write to him again . . ."

I understood at last. And I felt so sick, so miserable, so ashamed, somehow. Alongside of me, not three yards away, lived a human creature who had nobody in the world to treat her kindly, affectionately, and this human being had invented a friend for herself!

"Look, now! you wrote me a letter to Boles, and I gave it to someone else to read it to me; and when they read it to me I listened and fancied that Boles was there. And I asked you to write me a letter from Boles to Teresa—that is me. When they write such a letter for me, and read it to me, I feel quite sure that Boles is there. And life grows easier for me in consequence."

"Deuce take thee for a blockhead!" said I to myself when I heard this.

And from thenceforth, regularly, twice a week, I wrote a letter to Boles, and an answer from Boles to Teresa. I wrote those answers well . . . She, of course, listened to them, and wept like anything, roared, I should say, with her bass voice. And in return for my thus moving her to tears by real letters from the imaginary Boles, she began to mend the holes I had in my socks, shirts, and other articles of clothing. Subsequently, about three months after this history began, they put her in prison for something or other. No doubt by this time she is dead.

My acquaintance shook the ash from his cigarette, looked pensively up at the sky, and thus concluded:

Well, well, the more a human creature has tasted of bitter things the more it hungers after the sweet things of life. And we, wrapped round in the rags of our self-sufficiency, and persuaded of our universal impeccability, do not understand this.

And the whole thing turns out pretty stupidly—and very cruelly. The fallen classes, we say. And who are the fallen classes, I should like to know? They are, first of all, people with the same bones, flesh, and blood and nerves as ourselves. We have been told

this day after day for ages. And we actually listen—and the Devil only knows how hideous the whole thing is. Or are we completely depraved by the loud sermonizing of humanism? In reality we also are fallen folks, and, so far as I can see, very deeply fallen into the abyss of self-sufficiency and the conviction of our own superiority. But enough of this. It is all as old as the hills—so old that it is a shame to speak of it. Very old indeed—yes, that's where it is!

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